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SCHRÄTEL UND WASSERBÄR

The Middle High German *Schrätel und Wasserbär*¹ is the first appearance of a clever tale whose history, relations, and distribution are of considerable interest. The story is as follows:

The king of Norway sends a polar bear ("wazzerber") as a gift to the king of Denmark. The bear and its leader have just landed in Denmark when night overtakes them and they hasten on to a house by the roadside. The Norseman explains to the farmer that the bear is not a dangerous monster and asks quarters for the night. This request the farmer would gladly grant, but he confesses that he has no power over his homestead after nightfall, for a malicious cobold ("schretel") drives him and his cattle away each evening. The stranger declares his reliance on God, and repeats his request, to which the host gives unwilling assent. Well supplied with food, man and bear prepare to spend the night in the bakery. While both are asleep a red-capped cobold scarcely three spans long comes up to the fire and begins to roast some meat on an iron spit.

¹ A summary with excerpts appeared in W. Grimm, *Irische Elfenmärchen* (1826), pp. cxiv-cxix (= *Kleinere Schriften*, I, 482 ff.). It has been edited several times: Mone, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Heldensage* (1837), pp. 281-88; Wackernagel, *Zs. f. d. A.*, VI, 174-84; von der Hagen, *Gesammltabenteuer*, III, 261-70, No. 65; Wackernagel, *Altdeutsches Lesebuch*², pp. 825-34; Weinhold, *Mittelhochdeutsches Lesebuch*⁴, pp. 104-10; Bachmann, *Mittelhochdeutsches Lesebuch*⁵⁻⁶, pp. 166-71. There is a translation into modern German by *O. Henke, *Drei altdeutsche Schwänke*, Barmen, 1888 (cf. *Zs. f. d. d. Unterricht*, III, 566), and a retelling by Baumbach, *Abenteuer und Schwänke* (1904), pp. 57-64.

In this and succeeding notes books and articles which I have not seen are indicated by an asterisk. A list of the variants of the tale will be found below, pp. 64-66.

Jealously it eyes the interlopers, particularly the bear, until passion so overcomes it that it strikes the bear on the back of the head. The bear snarls but makes no move. When the meat drips fat the "schretel" deals another blow and the bear "turns the other cheek." Finally, when the chop sizzles with the heat, the little fellow raises spit and all high above his head and brings it down on the bear's mouth. Then the bear does not prove to be so lazy after all, and the scuffle begins in earnest. For some time neither side has an advantage, but ultimately the cobold is obliged to give in. All the while the bear's master has been watching the mêlée from a safe retreat in the oven, and even when the disturber of the peace has fled he does not venture forth. On the morrow the householder inquires somewhat anxiously about the health of his visitors, and before they go on learns the events of the night. Later that morning when the farmer has gone out into the field to plow, the disheveled cobold comes running up to him with the query: "Is your big cat still alive?" With ready wit the farmer grasps the situation, and assures the cobold that the "old cat" in addition to being alive is now the mother of five young ones. Thereupon the cobold flees forever, and since then the farmer and his family have lived happily in the farmhouse.

This anonymous Middle High German story is a work of considerable artistic merit. Besides being one of the very few brief narratives in verse of that period which take their subject from Germanic popular tradition, it is almost unique in its avoidance of the offensive allusion and incident which are so characteristic of the contemporary fabliaux, French and German. Especially delightful are the clever use of onomatopoeic words and the amusing description of how the cobold sought the quarrel. The anonymity of the poem has awakened much discussion, and attempts have been made to father it on Heinrich von Freiberg, one of the more distinguished successors of the great Middle High German poets.¹ Recently, however, the tendency has been to discredit these efforts, and the case for Heinrich's authorship has found no defenders since the thorough and

¹ *J. M. Wiggers, *Heinrich von Freiberg als Verfasser des Schwankes von Schrätel und Wasserbär*, Rostock Diss., 1877; R. Bechstein, "Zu Heinrich von Freibergs Schwank," *Romanische Forschungen*, V, 172-82; A. Bernt, *Heinrich von Freiberg* (1906), pp. 166-67.

painstaking investigations of von Kraus.¹ By comparison with the variants cited below, it is possible to determine the provenance of the Middle High German story. In it alone of the central European versions is the hero a polar bear:

Er was der wizen einer,
ein grözer, niht ein kleiner.²

And the polar bear is found in all the Norwegian versions I have been able to see.³ Consequently it is extremely probable that the Middle High German writer drew his tale from Northern sources. Corroborative of this opinion is the fact that the scene of the poem is Denmark. If he had been drawing on local tradition, he would have made the hero a brown or black bear (like all the German popular tales) and would have had no occasion to lay the scene in the North.

A determined attempt has been made to correlate this tale with the Grendel episode in *Beowulf*—where likewise a house is freed from a monster.⁴ Mone enlarged upon this comparison, which had been first suggested by Wilhelm Grimm, and concluded that the two stories were intimately related,⁵ and it has even been asserted that they correspond completely.⁶ Of all who have touched upon the subject Laistner⁷ has evolved the most inclusive combinations. He regards the Grendel episode, *Schrätel und Wasserbär*, and the *Mühlknappensage*⁸ as closely related variations of the same theme:

¹ *Zs. f. d. A.*, XLVIII, 99–102; see also Glöde, *Literaturblatt f. germ. u. rom. Philol.*, X, col. 7.

² Vss. 17–18. On familiarity with the polar bear in the Middle Ages see von Maurer, *Anzeiger zur Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit* (1863), p. 396, and G. Storm, "Hvíta björn og bjarnáyr," *Ark. f. nord. fil.*, XIII, 47–53.

³ Variants 41, 43, 44–47 in the list below. The Danish and Swedish tales, with the exception of Schaldemose (Variant 33), who has a black bear, do not specify the kind of bear.

⁴ The effort to connect *Schrätel und Wasserbär* with the story of Siegfried leads to nothing. See A. and A. Schott, *Walachische Märchen*, p. 358, and von der Hagen, *Gesamtabenteuer*, Vol. III, p. lxxiv.

⁵ W. Grimm, *Irische Elfenmärchen* (1826), p. cxix (= *Kleinere Schriften*, I, 482 ff.); Mone, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Heldensage* (1837), p. 287; see also Simrock, *Beowulf* (1859), pp. 176 ff. Grässe (*Literaturgeschichte*, II, 3, 86) objects to Mone's theory.

⁶ N. Müller, *Die Mythen in Beowulf*, Heidelberg Diss. (1878), pp. 48 ff., 64 ff.

⁷ *Rätsel der Sphinx*, II (1889), 15 ff. Singer (*Schweizer Märchen*, I [1903], 72) follows Laistner's grouping.

⁸ The *Mühlknappensage* tells how a miller's apprentice spent the night in a haunted mill; attacked by a swarm of cats, he cut off the paw of one of them, and on the morrow

"Bär durch Bär vertrieben"; but in order to reduce these different stories to a combat between bears he has to resort to rather violent expedients. He further believes that *Schrätel und Wasserbär* is identical with an episode in the *Bärensohnmärchen*, in which the son of a bear and a woman (or a man who has been suckled by a bear) overpowers and binds a dwarf who has disturbed him while he is cooking.¹ This is in fact similar to *Schrätel und Wasserbär*, but the *märchen* lacks the repartee in which bears and cats are confused and on which the humor of the cobold story depends. According to Panzer,² who develops Laistner's theories and who seems also to approve of Laistner's opinions regarding *Schrätel und Wasserbär*,³ the *Bärensohnmärchen* is the ultimate source of *Beowulf*. On the whole, the tendency in *Beowulf* criticism has been either to disregard

the miller's wife was found to have lost a hand. Tales very similar to this are frequent in witch-literature. There is an early example in Gervaise of Tilbury (*Otia Imperialia*, ed. Liebrecht, p. 45; cf. p. 137): "Scimus quasdam, in forma cattarum a furtive vigilanti-bus de nocte visas ac vulneratas, in crastino vulnera truncationesque membrorum ostendisse." For other examples see J. W. Wolf, *Niederländische Sagen* (1843), p. 477, No. 393; Boekenooogen, *Volkskunde*, XIX, 65-66, "Nederlandsche Sprookjes en Vertelsels," No. 111, "Van een betooverden molen"; Zand, *Ons Volksleven*, V, 115-16, "Kempische Sagen," No. 28, "Eene kat den poot afgekapt"; Kuhn and Schwartz, *Norddeutsche Sagen*, No. 225, 1; Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen*, No. 134; Bartsch, *Sagen, Märchen und Gebräuche aus Mecklenburg*, Nos. 278, 279; Müllenhof, *Sagen, Märchen und Lieder der Herzogtümer Schleswig-Holstein*, No. 311; J. W. Wolf, *Hessische Sagen*, No. 109; Schmitz, *Sitten und Sagen aus dem Eifel*, p. 46; R. Kühnau, *Schlesische Sagen*, II, 221, No. 857; *ibid.*, III, 24, No. 1375; D. E. Jenkins, *Bedd Gelert*, p. 260; J. G. Campbell, *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, p. 181; P. I. Begbie, *Supernatural Illusions*, I, 258; **Mitt. d. nordböh. Ezkursionsklubs*, V, 240; Reichhardt, *Zs. d. v. f. Vk.*, VI, 79; Jaworskij, *ibid.*, VIII, 332, No. 1; Liebrecht, *Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, LXV (1872), 842; Bergen, *Jour. of Am. Folklore*, XII, 68; Parsons, *ibid.*, XXX, 196, No. 54; Britten, *Folk-Lore Journal*, I, 53-54; E. M. Leather, *Folklore of Herefordshire*, p. 54; Jahn, *Volkssagen aus Pommern und Rügen* (1886), pp. 342-44. In J. Harland and T. T. Wilkinson, *Lancashire Legends, Traditions and Pageants*, p. 7, this tale is related to explain the legend of the white doe pursued by the specter huntsman at Eagle Crag, Todmorden.

For other tales of a monster which invades a hut and loses a hand in the ensuing conflict, see Kittredge, [Harvard] *Studies and Notes*, VIII, 228 ff.

¹ See Laistner, II, 21 ff. The *Bärensohnmärchen* is as follows: The hero (son of a bear, suckled by a bear, or otherwise of abnormal parentage) wounds the demon which has been plundering the king's apple tree. He then goes down into the underworld to seek three stolen princesses, and after his faithless comrades have drawn up the girls he is left below. By means of a talisman (or a bird) he makes his way back to the upper world, where he discloses the treachery of his companions, and marries the youngest princess. The combat with the dwarf is often an introductory episode.

The most complete list of variants is given by Bolte and Polfka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, II, 297-318 [No. 91, "Dat Erdmänneken"].

² *Studien zur germanischen Sagengeschichte*, I, *Beowulf*, 1910. See pp. 74-95, "Der Dämon im Waldhaus," for a detailed discussion of the incident of the dwarf-combat.

³ *Studien*, I, 254.

utterly such relationships as these, or to consider them as too remote to be of importance.¹ The possibility of a close connection between *Schrätel und Wasserbär* and *Beowulf* has never been considered seriously by anyone except Müller—and his dissertation was not even reviewed in the learned journals of the day. These various studies, however, enable us to see the story of *Schrätel und Wasserbär* in its proper perspective, and to regard it as a member of a large group of tales on the same theme: “the defence of a hall or hut against the demon that haunts it.”² Further, we can recognize that of all these tales it is most nearly related to the incident in the *Bärensohnmärchen*. But *Schrätel und Wasserbär* is more than that incident alone; a creative, artistic impulse has given it characteristic form and individual charm. It has not been sufficiently emphasized that *Schrätel und Wasserbär* is a clearly differentiated type of tale which has maintained itself for seven centuries by its own inherent merit.

The suggestion has been made that traces of *Schrätel und Wasserbär* are to be found in *Van Bere Wisselauwe*, a fragmentary Dutch poem which its author attached to the Charlemagne cycle by the mention of Charlemagne’s name and court.³ The connection with French sources is superficial; the spirit of the fragment is, as Martin suggests, that of the German popular epic,⁴ and its analogues render a German origin probable. The contents of the fragment, so far as it is intelligible, are as follows:

The bear Wisselau throws the spear of a giant who has attacked him into the sea. The victim calls on King Espriaen for help and dies from the effects of his conflict with the bear. Espriaen comes to the shore to demand satisfaction for his vassal’s death, but Gernout (Wisselau’s master) says that the fault was the giant’s. After

¹ Müllenhof, *Beowulf*, *Untersuchungen über das angelsächsische Epos* (Berlin, 1889), pp. 2 f.; Sedgefield, *Beowulf*, p. xxxv. O. L. Olson (*Publications of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study*, III, 35) refuses to equate *Schrätel und Wasserbär* with the *Bjarkirtmur*, which tell a story much like that of *Beowulf*.

² Kittredge, [Harvard] *Studies and Notes*, VIII, 230.

³ The latest edition is that by E. Martin, *Neue Fragmente des Gedichts Van den Vos Reinaerde und das Bruchstück Van Bere Wisselauwe* (*Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte der germanischen Völker*, LXV), Strassburg, 1889.

⁴ See te Winkel in Paul’s *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, II, 1, 421, and J. J. A. Frantzen, “De invloed der Duitsche letteren op de Nederlandsche,” *De Gids*, LIII (1889), 66 ff.

Espriaen has provoked a quarrel with the bear and Gernout has restored peace, he asks how many more such bears there are in the ship and, although there is only one, is told, "Four and all of them hungry." In fear of their release Espriaen returns to his castle, and thither also, when Wisselau has been dressed in a costly coat, go Gernout and the bear. Gernout then tells Wisselau to go into the kitchen, seize the food, throw the cook into his broth, and then bring cook and kettle into the king's hall. Just as Gernout is boasting how he overcame the bear and its four brothers, the seneschals run in with the news of the devastation in the kitchen, and after them comes Wisselau bearing cook and kettle. The terrified Espriaen reminds Gernout of his boasting; and as a demonstration *ad oculos*, Gernout, who orders the bear to submit in "gargoenscher tale" (which is unintelligible to Espriaen), has no difficulty in throwing the beast to the floor, where he scolds it for having eaten all the food in the kitchen. The king laughs; and the angry bear, who has burst the buttons of his coat, throws the coat into the fire. But none of Espriaen's giants would have ventured to order Wisselau from his place before the fire. Gernout, however, plans to get his master away from this country.¹ The fearful Espriaen suggests binding the bear for the night (Here the fragment breaks off.)

Substantially the same story is told as one of the episodes of the *þiðrekssaga*,² where, however, the trouble-maker is not a real bear but a man disguised in a bear's skin. It has already been pointed out by Martin³ and others that this portion of the *þiðrekssaga* is an anthropomorphization of *Van Bere Wisselauwe*. It is, however, not so clear⁴ that these two stories are to be connected with *Schrätel und Wasserbär*, although Martin says (p. 68):

Auf jeden Fall ist das ganze Abenteuer von hilfreichen Bären in die deutsche Heldensage [i.e., *þiðrekssaga*] ebenso wie in die niederländische

¹ Gernout's master has not been mentioned before.

² Ed. Unger, chap. 132-44, 181. The *þiðrekssaga* is derived from Low German sources. This episode and *Van Bere Wisselauwe* represent a story of which no clear trace remains in German literature. An incident in *König Rother* is in some way connected with these two stories, but it seems to have nothing to do with *Schrätel und Wasserbär*; see te Winkel, Paul's *Grundriss*², II, 1, 421.

³ *Neue Fragmente*, p. 67.

⁴ Leitzmann (*Literaturblatt für germ. u. rom. Philol.*, Vol. X [1889], col. 292) also fails to see the force of Martin's arguments.

Karlssage [i.e., Van Bere Wisselauwe] erst nachträglich eingeschaltet worden: es stand ursprünglich für sich. In dieser Selbständigkeit hat es sich noch in die spätere Zeit erhalten, als Kampf zwischen schretel und wazzerber.

That the episodes are later insertions both in the *þiðrekssaga* and in *Van Bere Wisselauwe* may be granted; that they tell the same tale as our story is still a question. The attendant circumstances of the combat and the nature of the opponents offer no striking similarities; the fact that all three narrate a conflict between a bear and a cook—it will be remembered that the cobold is roasting a chop when the scuffle begins—is only a superficial resemblance. And what is more important, the concluding repartee is absent in Old Norse and Dutch, unless one sees a parallel in Gernout's statement that he has four hungry bears on board. Of this Martin says (p. 72): “Eine kecke Prahlerei scheint es zu sein, wenn Gernout noch vier andere Bären in seinem Schiffe verborgen zu haben behauptet; auch dies ist Stil der Spielmannspoésie.” Apparently then he does not consider it parallel to the conclusion of *Schrätel und Wasserbär*.

There is no evidence—unless the possibilities of relationships with *Beowulf* and *Van Bere Wisselauwe* be considered as such, and they do not lead to any very tangible results—that *Schrätel und Wasserbär* was widely known in the Middle Ages. Indeed there is no mention of it after the anonymous Middle High German poem until it appears in recent collections of popular tales. Ziehnert,¹ to be sure, says he had seen it in “old chronicles,” but he does not cite them, and it is impossible to fill in the gap in the story's history between the thirteenth and the nineteenth century. Its frequent occurrence in modern collections, however, and its wide distribution show clearly that it has enjoyed a continuous popularity. It is found in Finland, Scandinavia, Denmark, Esthonia, Bohemia, the German-speaking part of Central Europe as far south as Carinthia, and in Scotland. The variations in these different instances are such that literary transmission—which is possible only after the appearance of Ziehnert's collection of Silesian tales (1817) and the excerpts from the Middle High German manuscript in Grimm's *Irische Elfenmärchen* (1826)—is out of the question.

¹ *Sachsens Volkssagen*, II (1838), 22.

LIST OF VARIANTS

GERMANY: **1**, "Schrätel und Wasserbär," von der Hagen, *Gesamtabenteuer*, III, 261-70, No. 65 (see above, p. 57, n. 1); **2**, Müllenhof, *Sagen, Märchen und Lieder der Herzogtümer Schleswig-Holstein und Lauenburg* (Kiel, 1845), p. 257, No. 346, "Der Wassermann und der Bär"; **3**, Kuhn and Schwartz, *Norddeutsche Sagen* (Leipzig, 1848), p. 203, No. 225, 2; **4**, Engelien and Lahn, *Der Volksmund in der Mark Brandenburg*, I (Berlin, 1869), 21, No. 11, "Där Kobbolt vanne Wiëlmölle"; **5**, O. Knoop, "Volks-tümliches aus der Tierwelt," *Blätter für pommersche Volkskunde*, VII (1899), 14-15, No. 5, "Der Bär und der Teufel" (Karlsboh, Kreis Neugard); **6**, Schambach and Müller, *Niedersächsische Sagen und Märchen* (Göttingen, 1855), p. 66; **7**, Seifart, *Sagen, Märchen, Schwänke und Gebräuche aus Stadt und Stift Hildesheim*, II (Göttingen, 1860), 52, No. 36, "Die Mühlenzwerge"; **8**, H. Pröhle, *Harzsagen*², I (Leipzig, 1886), 110, No. 4; **9**, A. Schleicher, *Volks-tümliches aus Sonneberg im Meininger Oberlande* (Weimar, 1858), p. 76, "Fän Schlaazleen"; **10**, R. Eisel, *Sagenbuch des Voigtlandes* (Gera, 1871), No. 119; **11**, Schönwerth, *Aus der Oberpfalz*, II (Augsburg, 1857-59), 187; **12**, F. Panzer, *Bayerische Sagen und Bräuche; Beitrag zur deutschen Mythologie*, II (Munich, 1858), 160-61, No. 256, "Holzfräulein"; **13**, R. Kühnau, *Schlesische Sagen*, II, *Elben-, Dämonen- und Teufelssagen* (Leipzig, 1911), p. 222, No. 858, "Der Wassernix und der Bär in der Ölmühle" = *Haupt, *Sagenbuch der Lausitz*, I (Leipzig, 1862-63), 52 f., No. 49 (Märkische Lausitz); **14**, *ibid.*, II, 238, No. 877 (Middle Silesia, Kreis Münsterberg); **15**, *ibid.*, II, 242, No. 885 (Middle Silesian, Kreis Grottkau); **16**, *ibid.*, II, 293, No. 923, 3 = *Mitteilungen der schlesischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* (1901), p. 45 (Polish Upper Silesia, Kreis Beuthen); **17**, *ibid.*, II, 305, No. 925, 6 = *ibid.* (1903), p. 57 (Polish Upper Silesia, Kreis Rybnik); **18**, *ibid.*, II, 310, No. 926, 7 (Polish Upper Silesia, Kreis Cosel); **19**, *ibid.*, II, 318, No. 927, 5 (Polish Upper Silesia, Kreis Neustadt); **20**, *ibid.*, II, 345-46, No. 948 = *Fiedler, *Riesengebirge in Wort und Bild*, IX (1889), 129 = *J. Schade, *Was sich unsere Väter erzählten* (1903), p. 241 = *Deutsche Volkskunde aus dem östlichen Böhmen*, VIII (1908), 63, No. 156 (Northeast Bohemia); **21**, A. Meiche, *Sagenbuch des Königreichs Sachsen* (Leipzig, 1903), p. 376, No. 496, "Der Wassermann und der Bär in der Schleifermühle"; **22**, *ibid.*, pp. 445-46, No. 583, "Die Katzenmühle bei Buchholz" = J. G. T. Grässe, *Sagenschatz des Königreichs Sachsen*, 2d and enlarged ed., I (Dresden, 1874), 467, No. 525 = Bechstein, *Deutsches Sagenbuch* (Leipzig, 1853), p. 524, No. 633, "Die bösen Katzen." The foregoing prose tales are derived from the verses of W. Ziehnert, *Sachsens Volkssagen*, II (Annaberg, 1838), 21-28 and in one volume (Annaberg, 1851), pp. 192-98, No. 26 (the first edition of this book [1817] is at the same time the first appearance of *Schrätel und Wasserbär* in print).

WENDISH: **23**, Schulenberg, *Wendische Volkssagen* (Leipzig, 1880), p. 122; **24**, *ibid.* (a second version); **25**, *ibid.*, *Wendisches Volkstum* (Berlin, 1882), p. 59, "Der Hodernyks und der Bär"; **26**, *E. Kühn, *Der Spreewald* (1889), p. 111 (cf. R. Köhler, *Kleinere Schriften*, I [Weimar, 1898], 72); **27**, E. Veckenstedt, *Wendische Sagen, Märchen und abergläubische Gebräuche* (Graz, 1880), pp. 195-96, No. 33.

AUSTRIAN: **28**, Vernaleken, *Mythen und Bräuche des Volkes in Oesterreich* (Vienna, 1859), pp. 180-82=Grohmann, *Sagen aus Böhmen*, p. 158; **29**, *ibid.*, p. 182 (Einloth, Moravia); **30**, *Cas. M.S. (1894), p. 98 (cf. Meiche, *Sagenbuch*, p. 376, n. 1). This seems to mean *Časopis Museálnej slovenskej Spoločnosti* and not *Časopis towařstwa Maćicy Serbkeje*; but neither of these is accessible to me. It is not *Časopis Musea Kralovstvi Českeho*. **31**, G. Graber, *Sagen aus Kärnten* (Leipzig, 1914), p. 163, No. 208, "Ein Hausgeist"; **32**, *ibid.*, p. 75, No. 87, "Der furchtsame Waldmann."

DENMARK: **33**, F. J. Schaldemose, *Krønnike-Lises Aeventyr eller Fyenske Sagn* (Copenhagen, 1844), pp. 146-51, "Trolde og Bjørnen"; **34**, S. Grundtvig, *Gamle Danske Minder*, III (Copenhagen, 1861), 91, No. 3, "Trolde og Bjørnen" (his reference [III, 230] to Kuhn, *Märkische Sagen* [without page] seems to be erroneous; he says he has seen a MS version from Vendsyssel); **35**, J. P. Möller, *Folkesagn og andre mundtlige Minder fra Bornholm* (Copenhagen, 1867), pp. 26-27, "Bjørnegaarden"; **36**, E. T. Kristensen, *Sagn fra Jylland (Jyske Folkeminder*, IV) (Copenhagen, 1880), p. 312, No. 411, "Tusse og dens Hvalpe"; **37**, E. T. Kristensen, *Danske Sagn, som de har lydt i folkemunde*, Århus, 1892, iste Afdeling: Bjærgfolk, § 86, *Æventyrlige sagn om Bjærgfolk*, pp. 434-35, No. 1400; **38**, *ibid.*, pp. 435-36, No. 1401; **39**, *ibid.*, p. 436, No. 1402 (defective); **40**, E. T. Kristensen, *Efterslæt til "Skattegraveren,"* Kolding, 1890, pp. 158-59, No. 114, "Bjørnetrækkerne."

NORWAY: **41**, Faye, *Norske Folkesagn*² (Christiania, 1844), pp. 30-32; **42**, *R. Braset, *Gammelt paa Sporbumaal*, II, 35; **43**, Asbjørnsen, *Norske Huldre-eventyr*, II (Christiania, 1848), 47 ff., "Rensdyrjagt ved Ronderne" (the cobold story is pp. 77 ff.)=H. L. Brækstad, *Round the Yule Log* (London, 1881), pp. 145-50=W. Archer, *Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen*, IV, *Peer Gynt* (New York, 1908), pp. 276-78; **44**, Asbjørnsen and Moe, *Norske Folke-eventyr*, revideret udgave ved Moltke Moe, II (Christiania, 1899), 163-65, No. 56, "Kjættet paa Dovre"=Dasent, *Popular Tales from the Norse*² (Edinburgh, 1869), pp. 103-4, "The cat on the Dovrefell"=Bresemann, *Norwegische Märchen*, I, 183, No. 26; **45**, J. T. Storaker and O. Fuglestedt, *Folkesagn, samlede i Lister og Mandals Amt*, 1ste Del (Flekkefjord, 1881), p. 10, No. 2, "Kvanvigtrøldet" (Parish of Hitterø); **46**, *ibid.*, pp. 40-41, No. 52, "Underjordiske paa Skjækkeland"; **47**, *ibid.*, pp. 113-14, No. 165, "Underjordiske paa Kvinlog"; **48-54**, Feilberg (*Jul*, II, 323-24) cites seven more Norwegian variants which have been inaccessible to me and some of

which I was unable to identify even with the help of the bibliography of Norwegian folklore in Paul's *Grundriss*², II, 1, 1169 ff.

SWEDEN: **55**, Kahle, "Aus schwedischem Volksglauben," *Zs. d. V. f. Vks.*, X, 198. It is presumably taken from Wigström, "Folktro ock sägner," *Nyare bidrag till kännedom om de svenska landsmålen ock svenskt folklif*, VIII, 3 (Nos. 61, 65, 1898, 1899), but he gives no reference; **56**, H. Hofberg, *Svenska Folksägner* (Stockholm, 1882), pp. 109-11, "Kisse i Norrhult" (Östergötland); cf. notes, p. 213. The review by A. Ramm (*Svenska landsmålen*, II, cxvii) adds nothing; **57**, E. T. Kristensen, *Danske Sagn*, Århus, 1892, I, 436-37, No. 1403 (Feilberg equates this with "Hazel," V, 25," which I have not identified. Although the scene of Kristensen's story is Sweden, it seems to have been collected in Denmark); ***58**, Feilberg (*Jul*, II, 323-24) cites Rääf, I, 55, which may perhaps be L. F. Rääf, *Samlingar och Anteckningen til en Beskrefning öfver ydre Härad i Östergötland*, Linköping, 1856.

SCOTLAND: **59**, Gregor, "Kelpie Stories from the North of Scotland," *Folk-Lore Journal*, I, 293.

ESTHONIA: **60**, O. Kallas, "Achtzig Märchen der Ljutziner Esten," pp. 385-86, No. 70, "Der Gehörnte und der Bär" (cf. summary in German, p. 173) in *Verhandlungen der estnischen Gesellschaft*, XX and separately.

FINLAND: **61-100**, Aarne, *FF Communications*, V, No. 1161 (cites 39 MS variants, of which one has been published in Finnish; it is inaccessible); **100-106**, Hackmann, *FF Communications*, VI, No. 1161 (cites 8 variants from Swedes in Finland; the two following are accessible); **107**, Åberg, *Nyländska Folksagor* (*Nyland*, II [Helsingfors, 1887]), pp. 6-7, No. 4, "Om tontn björn"; **108**, Allardt and Perklén, *Nyländska Folksagor och -Sägner* (*Nyland*, VI [Helsingfors, 1896]), p. 75, No. 74, "Spöki."

The outline which has already been given of the Middle High German version will serve as a basis for remarks on the tale as a whole. Almost every later version has, to be sure, some peculiar, though often insignificant, trait of its own. In some cases it is apparent that these variations are changes which do not always improve the story; but since it would require an undue amount of space to discuss them all, I shall touch upon only the more significant. The nature of these peculiarities will perhaps be exhibited most clearly if we consider in succession the differences in the scene of the combat and in the figures of the victor and the vanquished, as the story is related by its different narrators.

Two places are mentioned as the scene of the conflict: a farmer's house (stable, etc.), and a mill. Of these the former is obviously

the earlier, for it occurs in the most widely scattered variants. The mill is found in nearly half the total number of variants; but these, with the single exception of the Scotch tale (Variant 59),¹ come only from Central Europe, from German, Wendish, and Bohemian sources. And even there the predominance of the mill as the scene is not unchallenged, for the farmer's house or stable appears in stories from Bavaria, Carinthia, Prussia, and elsewhere in Central Europe. Owing no doubt to the nocturnal habits of the miller and to the strange noises which issue from a mill, mills have come in German popular tales to be a center for all mysterious and uncanny acts and creatures. The localization at a mill as a later development of our story might for this reason be expected.

Concerning the “hero” of the tale, the bear, there is some divergence of opinion among the narrators. The readiest source of incoherency lies in the storyteller's recollection that the tale was to end with a threatening and false allusion to a number of bears. Consequently we find in several cases² that this recollection has suggested the introduction at the beginning of the story of several bears which take part in the scuffle. This trait cannot be original; in the earliest form of the story there must have been only one bear. Only if it were tame—some variants call it a “Tanzbär”—could it be brought to the haunted house for the adventure with the cobold. The tameness is overemphasized in a story from the Palatinate (Variant 11) in which a traveling journeyman³ who had with him “three bears as dogs”(!) offers to spend the night in the haunted place. The proper owner of a bear of this sort is a mime, and a development of this figure led to the substitution of apes,⁴ which such players often kept, for the bear. A dog takes the place of the bear in a Carinthian tale (Variant 32) because it is characteristically the animal which drives away unwelcome guests, and an entirely independent Norwegian version (Variant 45) has a “white dog” as its hero instead

¹ For convenience the variants will be cited by their numbers in the list above.

² Variants 7, 11, 14, 17, 23, 24.

³ Apparently the journeyman was more familiar than the travelling comedian in the capacity of a wanderer. The duplication of persons (travelling journeyman and bear-leader) which we find in Variant 2 is probably due to contamination, as Laistner (*Rätsel*, II, 16) suggests.

⁴ Variant 29; cf. Variants 16 (circus-man has bear and ape) and 31 (bear, ape, and dog).

of the usual polar bear.¹ On the other hand, the replacement of the bear by a boar, as in the Scotch tale (Variant 59), has no apparent cause, and does not commend itself. A story from Kreis Neustadt in Polish Upper Silesia (Variant 19) is completely disorganized by the substitution of a cat for the bear—a change suggested by the repartee which usually concludes the story.²

And also concerning the bear's opponent the narrators are by no means in accord. He is called "Kobold" (Variant 10), "Schrätel,"³ "Männchen" (Variant 15), or with less definiteness "Schreckgespenst" (Variant 31) and "der Böse" (Variants 22, 60). Once or twice he (she) is said to be a forest-creature: "Holzfräulein" (Variant 12) and "der Wilde Mann" (Variant 32). The conception of such house-haunting monsters varies constantly; in the same district they are thought of now as friendly and now as hostile guests.⁴ It is not always clear even to the narrator whether they are in origin forest- or water-demons, or whether they are more closely attached to the house and to man. In the former case they are likely to be strong, hostile, and dangerous; in the latter, weak, friendly, and helpful. Of course the story of *Schrätel und Wasserbär* implies,

¹ This is one of three variants collected in Norway by Storaker and Fuglestad (Variants 45-47) which exhibit an increasing degeneration ending in the complete destruction of the story. Variant 45 makes the substitution as noted above, yet the trolls ask a year later whether the "cat" is still in the house; Variant 46 finds the confusion of a dog with a cat even by a troll improbable and has the troll ask whether the "white dog" is still there. Finally Variant 47 leaves out the dog entirely, consequently also the question and answer about the "cat," and has in common with the others only a curious dialogue between the hunter and the trolls, which is as follows. Just as the leader of the trolls fills his glass the hunter cries, "Here's a draught for you, Sven Trone!" and fires a shot at him. The last of these three variants is reduced to this episode alone; in other words, we are no longer dealing with the original story. But it is plain, I think, that this corruption is the result of the substitution of a dog for the bear.

² It is intelligible only by comparison with better-preserved forms, as this summary shows: Two water-demons came to the now half-ruined mill near Mochau in order to cook fish before the fire. A cat stole their fish from them, and at its second attempt they beat it. The enraged cat then sprang into their faces; and since that time they have not been seen in the mill.

³ A small elf; see Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*⁴, p. 396. A glossary of 1506 says: "Lemures sunt fantastica nocturnalina schrätel"; cf. Weinhold, *Zs. d. V. f. Vvk.*, VIII, 446.

⁴ Cf. Grimm, *op. cit.*, ch. xvii, "Wichte und Elbe." The fullest recent discussion is that of H. F. Feilberg, "Der Kobold in nordischer Ueberlieferung," *Zs. d. V. f. Vvk.*, VIII (1898), 1 ff., 130 ff., 264 ff. For a generously documented study which makes plain the capricious variations of the folk's conceptions of these creatures see Kittredge, "The Friar's Lantern and Friar Rush," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XV (1900), 415-41, and especially pp. 430 ff. The "Bieresel" is usually a friendly creature something like the English brownie, but in a Low German version of our story (Variant 3) it is unmistakably hostile and pugnacious; cf. Laistner, *Rätsel*, II, 18.

indeed requires, pugnacity on the part of the bear's opponent; but notwithstanding this, the story has been transferred to the gentle house-elf in a few variants. It is quite evident on the slightest reflection, however, that this transfer is due to the wavering and uncertain ideas of the folk concerning such creatures. The friendliness of the water-demon in the following tale from Polish Upper Silesia (Variant 17)—characteristic rather of the house-elf than of the water-demon as a species¹—illustrates the point:

The narrator's grandmother owned the "Mittelmühle" at Sohran where the water-demon ("Wassermann") dwelt. In the evening he often came into the mill and warmed himself at the stove. He also received things to eat, and out of gratitude he set the mill going and ground in an hour or two as much flour as the miller could in a week. He liked to drink milk and often went into the cow-stable to milk the cows. Once a bear-leader spent the night in the mill. The bears were locked in the cow-stable and the cows were put elsewhere. At night the water-demon came to milk the cows. Since he knew nothing of the removal, he went in among the bears. They beat him so badly that he did not venture to return. Rising from the river, he asked the people of the mill a few days later: "Miller, miller, are the cats still here?" and was answered, "No, no, for they have gone away."²

The story is really left hanging in the air; apparently the water-demon does not return in spite of the implied hope that he will.

In a story from North Germany (Variant 4) the narrator has partially adapted his story to the nature of the house-elf, but with the same injury to its effectiveness as was evident in the preceding instance:

The bear-leader and his bear stop for the night at a mill. With peaceful intent "där Roetjeckije" comes in late at night, makes a fire, and begins to roast meat. The bear smells the smoke of the cooking, goes to the stove, and puts its paw on the dish. The frightened cobold screams and rushes out to hide itself in a pile of twigs. Four weeks later it stops the miller in a wood and asks, "Jssen där met sine grote Ouen un Poten un met sinen langen

¹ Cf. Golther, *Handbuch der germanischen Mythologie*, pp. 145 ff.

² Question and answer are in Polish; the remainder in German.

Pelz noch doa?" The miller says yes, and that it has seven young—which scares Roetjeckije away permanently.

It is not easy to see why Roetjeckije was not driven away long before if his presence had become burdensome; and the same remark applies to "Der furchtsame Waldmann" (Variant 32), which is as follows:

The "Wilde Mann" cried, "Lena, give me some barley." Then he came to the peasant-woman to whom he had called and ate all the barley she gave him. Once she set a shaggy dog on him and he took flight. When he later repeated his cry, the peasant-woman said he should come and get the barley. He answered, "I am coming; but do you still have that bad cat?"

Most remarkable of these broken-down versions is one from Central Germany (Variant 9), in which there is no conflict at all. The miller realizes the value of the "schlaazla" to him and drives away the bear before any harm is done. Here then the corruption of the story is complete:

A bear-keeper spends the night in a mill; he ties his bear inside. When the "schlaazla" enter the mill at night and begin to sweep up the meal, they come upon the bear and it claws them. Then they cry to the miller that he should put out his "black cat," or they will not come again. He rises and puts out the bear.

The Danish and Norwegian have usually a number of trolls as the invaders of the house.¹ This is probably not original, but is due to a Scandinavian preference for bands of trolls rather than monsters which appear singly.² Such a multiplication of the bear's enemies is not in keeping with the story, which is to end in a dialogue; but the Norse versions escape any complications by having one troll speak for the group. In a Swedish tale (Variant 55) the representative of the group is slightly differentiated from the other trolls; since this story has certain curious features of its own it is worth summarizing:

A huge troll-woman and a host of smaller trolls haunted a room from which a man and a bear drove them. Generations later a

¹ The variant from Fyen, Denmark (33) is the only exception to this rule; in it the house is haunted every night by one troll.

² It is also characteristic of these Norse visitors that they appear on Christmas Eve; such a restriction to a particular night is not found in the other variants.

monstrous woman asks a wood-chopper, “Is the big cat in Norrholt still alive?” Fortunately he knows of the conflict from tradition and has sufficient presence of mind to guess what the words “big cat” mean. So he answers, “Yes, she is lying on the stove and has seven young, all worse than she is.” The troll-woman cries for protection at the very mention of the bear, but cannot call on God.¹ Then she turns away and in so doing shows the hollow back that these forest-women often have.

Here the forest-woman has been made conspicuous as the leader of the trolls and she is therefore the logical person to take part in the dialogue.² Only a few of the Central European variants³ speak of more than one haunting monster. A tale from the Harz (Variant 13) exhibits a confusing corruption which springs in part from the augmentation of the bear’s enemies:

An old soldier, having asked and received permission to spend the night in a mill which the miller had found untenable, settles himself comfortably by the stove and lights his pipe. At midnight a troop of dwarfs come in and set the table with gold and silver dishes which at once fill themselves with food. Then six appear who bear their king, Hibich, on a litter. Hardly has Hibich sat down when he smells the scent of tobacco; and following his orders, his men attack the intruder with golden knives and forks. But a few blows of the soldier’s stick drive them all out in such haste that they forget to take their precious utensils with them. Some of these the old man sells and some he keeps to supply him with food. On the morning after this adventure miller and soldier are sitting in the mill when they hear three knocks on the window and a voice inquires, “Miller, do you still have your bad cat?” To this the ready-witted soldier replies, “Yes, she has twelve young every night.” Thenceforth peace prevails in the mill.

¹ Only in this matter of the troll’s inability to utter the divine name—a wholly inessential point so far as our story is concerned—are the tales cited in Kahle’s note parallel; cf. *Zs. d. V. f. Vlk.*, X, 198, n. 1.

² The lapse of several generations between the visits of the troll is found only in this tale; elsewhere the interval is much shorter and varies from one day to seven years. In fact, a Danish version (Variant 36) goes to the opposite extreme by having the repartee take place on the very same night as the conflict.

³ A North German story (Variant 7) has dwarfs, and a Wendish one (Variant 24), three nixes.

It is quite obvious from the dwarf's query that the real hero of the combat, the bear, has been wholly forgotten¹ by the narrator, who is not even conscious of his omission when he comes to the question about the "cat."

In the variants which have been discussed the bear's opponent has been thought of as a land-creature; but there are many instances in which he is called a water-demon of some sort: Nix, Wassermann, Hastrmann, or kelpie. It seems probable that, as the story was told again and again, a demand for greater definiteness in the descriptions of the participants made itself felt. Since the scene, owing to a similar effort to gain vividness, had been localized in a mill, it was natural to conceive the haunting monster as rising from the water. That it was from the first a water-demon seems less likely; in each district the prevailing type of haunting monster would be introduced into the story, as we have already seen, for example, in the case of the Norse trolls. The figure of the "Nix" or "Wassermann" is a more colorful one than that of the cobold, and the descriptions of it are often remarkably vivid. The monster dripping with water brings fish or frogs to roast in the mill. It is seen in the mill-dam, and its appearance is often associated with some disorder in the workings of the mill: the wheels stop turning and the water ceases to flow.

There are two versions which are of particular interest as containing certain märchen elements. In a story from Schleswig-Holstein (Variant 2) the haunted mill burns down every seven years. On the eve of the conflagration the miller says to a wandering journeyman, "If the mill doesn't burn while you are in it to-night, then I will give it to you and you shall have my daughter besides," which recalls "my daughter and half my kingdom" of the märchen. A Bohemian tale (Variant 28) contains almost exactly this last phrase and is interesting enough to justify a summary:

A hard-hearted, dishonest miller owned a mill near the city of Moldautain on the right bank of the Moldau. Before long the report became current that the mill was haunted. The miller repented of

¹ This lapse of memory has already been noticed by Sprenger, *Zs. f. d. Ph.*, XXVIII, 429. E. H. Meyer (*Mythologie der Germanen* [Strassburg, 1902], p. 186) fails to see that Pröhle's tale is merely a corruption of *Schrätel und Wasserbär* and consequently misinterprets it.

his thefts, but it was too late. Just as he was on the point of abandoning the mill a comedian with apes and parrots begged quarters for the night. The miller warned him of the danger, saying, "No one has been able to drive the monster away, although I have offered the half of my wealth to such a man." The comedian declared his willingness to stay, especially in view of the miller's offer. He then made himself comfortable in the mill. At eleven o'clock two feet appeared through the ceiling; at quarter past, a hand; at half past, another; at quarter to twelve, the body. On the stroke of midnight the wheels stopped, the water rushed more violently, a head with long green hair fell in, and the parts united to form a "Hastrmann" who sprang about and threatened the comedian. The latter sent one ape after another against the demon until it fled in defeat. In the morning he informed the miller of the situation, collected his reward, and went on this way. One evening the "Hastrmann" knocked on the window and asked, "Do you still have the cat?" The miller answered, "Yes, I have her and six young ones besides." "Then I shall never again enter your mill."

The most curious feature in this story is the piecemeal entrance of the "Hastrmann." This mode of entrance¹ is found in an episode of the "Fürchten lernen" cycle (Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, No. 4). "Fürchten lernen" tells the adventures of a youth who seeks to learn what fear (or shuddering) is. He undergoes a variety of terrifying trials without success, until finally his wish is satisfied by some unexpected, yet ordinary happening, such as a sudden ducking in cold water. One of these trials is usually the spending of three nights in a haunted house and on one of them a demon appears in the fashion just described. The episode of the stay in the haunted house as it is found in the märchen has a remote analogy to the theme of *Schrätel und Wasserbär*; this similarity may have suggested the borrowing of a particular motif. In a Swedish tale from Finland (Variant 108) the spook says on entering the hut,

¹ For parallels see Bolte and Polivka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, I, 30, n. 1; MacPhail, *Folk-Lore*, IX, 88; Begbie, *Supernatural Illusions*, II (1858), 10; Sébillot, *Rev. des trad. pop.*, IX, 172; *Journal of Am. Folklore*, XII, 64-65; Parsons, *ibid.*, XXX, 195, n. 2, 217; G. Graber, *Sagen aus Kärnten* (Leipzig, 1914), p. 173, No. 228, "Fall äbe"; *Zs. f. öst. Vlk.*, VII, 198, No. 32; and a singularly grewsome example in Seymour and Neligan, *True Irish Ghost Stories*, p. 234.

"Puff, puff, it smells of Christian blood here"; the phrase is familiar in märchen.¹

The Swedish "Kisse i Norrhult" (Variant 56) is noteworthy for the fact that it contains an incident from a totally different cycle of tales. The essential portion of the story is as follows:

Seven years after the trolls have been driven out from a house in Norrhult, a man from that village is walking home from Norrköping when he is stopped by a stranger on a black horse who asks him to mount and ride. He does so, and notices before long that they are not riding on the highroad but high in the air. When the horse stumbles the stranger explains that its foot had struck Linköping church steeple. The stranger asks about the "cat" in Norrhult, and is assured that it is still alive and the mother of many young. The troll, for the stranger is of course one, lets his companion dismount and then rides off.

It is quite unnecessary for the story to continue, as it does, with the visit of another troll to Norrhult and the usual dialogue; the retention of the ordinary conclusion shows that this episode of the aerial ride is an insertion into the story. The episode of the man borne home through the air by a troll (or the devil) is a familiar one in the story of Henry the Lion and in similar tales in which the long-lost husband reappears just at the moment when his wife is about to marry again.²

Since the Middle High German poem, the story of *Schrätel und Wasserbär* has received no literary treatment until 1817, when it appeared, under the title of "Die Katzenmühle bei Buchholz," in E. W. A. Ziehnert's collection of *Sachsens Volkssagen* (Variant 22). Ziehnert was an industrious versifier of local story, but his literary ability hardly rose above mediocrity. His aim was to give the tales of the old chroniclers and of popular tradition a permanent form which should at the same time preserve the flavor of the original and heighten "den oft hartnäckigen und wenig ergiebigen Stoff durch das Colorit der Phantasie." What he has actually done with this

¹ Bolte and Polívka, *Anmerkungen*, I, 289-92.

² For a discussion of this type of story see W. Splettstösser, *Der heimkehrende Gatte und sein Weib in der Weltliteratur*. There is a good collection of such stories (from Denmark) in Kristensen, *Danske Sagn*, I, 410-417, § 81, Ridt med bjærgmanden.

story is to dilute the brief folk-tale—which for its effectiveness depends a great deal on its brevity—into twenty-three 7-line stanzas; and although he says it is told “von mehreren Chroniken,” he is obviously acquainted with it only as a popular tale. The first stanza is characteristic of his “style” and of his leisurely manner:

Man sagt wohl oft: “Vor weisen Männern
 hat auch der Teufel selbst Respect.”
 Und doch lass’ ich mir’s nicht bestreiten,
 dass er sogar den weisen Leuten
 schon oftmals unter’s Dach geheckt,
 und folgende Geschichte lehrt,
 dass er sich nicht an Weisheit kehrt.

He continues: The miller at Buchholz usually did not pay very close attention when grinding corn, and although he was no doubt an honest man, he was soon able to buy the mill and build an adjoining stable.¹ Hardly was the stable finished when the Evil One appeared in it and drove out the miller’s asses. Since they would not re-enter their stalls, the miller generously took them into his house. The devil was left in the stable, where he often made more noise than the miller in the mill. This state of affairs continued until a night when two men with two bears asked for quarters. Although the stable was haunted, they did not refuse the miller’s offer of it for their beasts. During the night the devil came and the ensuing conflict awakened the miller and his guests, who rushed out just as the bears were victorious. Ziehnert’s description of this scene shows his efforts at humor and his predilection for foreign words:

Sie gehn hinaus, und sehn—o Freude!
 wie just der Teufel retirirt,
 und sich—das war doch ohne Zweifel
 recht eigentlich ein dummer Teufel!
 aus seiner Wohnung fortskissirt.
 Die Bäre hatten obgesiegt,
 und waren wohlauf und vergnügt.

The story concludes with the return of the devil, the usual dialogue, and his flight.

¹ The haunting of the mill because the miller is dishonest appears also in Variant 28, summarized above, p. 65.

Higher than Ziehnert's quasi-literary version the story has not risen; but it is at least honored with brief mention in the work of a master. For Ibsen alludes to it in *Peer Gynt*, when a lad with a bear's skin says mockingly to Peer:

Look, the cat of the Dovrë! Well, only his fell,
It was he chased the trolls out on Christmas Eve.¹

But after all, the story of *Schrätel und Wasserbär* belongs to the folk. A Heine or a Burns might have given it the permanent form that Ziehnert sought; but its rough humor and imagination are characteristic of the common people.

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¹ V, iv (Archer's translation [1908], p. 221). H. Logemann (*A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Norwegian Text of Henrik Ibsen's "Peer Gynt," Its Language, Literary Associations and Folklore* [The Hague, 1917], p. 298, note on line 3833) summarizes the story as given by Asbjørnsen and Moe and makes reference to the important collection of variants in Fellberg, *Jul.*, II, 323-24. I am indebted to the courtesy of Dr. A. LeRoy Andrews for information about both of these books.